




## TOWN OF MIAMI LAKES MEMORANDUM

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To: Alex Rey, Town Manager

From: Tony Lopez, Evaluation Committee Chair 

Subject: RFP No. 2016-47, State Lobbying Services, Evaluation Committee Recommendation

Date: November 30, 2016

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### **Recommendation**

The Evaluation Committee recommends that the Town Manager award a contract in the amount of approximately \$150,000 to Southern Strategy Group (“SSG”), who is the highest ranked, most qualified firm submitting a response to the above-referenced solicitation.

### **Overview**

On September 12, 2016 the Town issued a Request for Proposals (“RFP”) for State Lobbying Services. The closing date for submittal of responses to the RFP was October 5, 2016. The solicitation was advertised in the Miami Daily Business Review, and posted on the Town’s website, Demandstar, and the Government Center Lobby.

The services to be provided include, but are not limited to, being proactive in monitoring, taking positions and lobbying on state budgeting and legislation, which impacts the Town, particularly in the areas of public safety, law enforcement, business attraction and retention, infrastructure improvements, telecommunications, transportation, environmental, park development, park land acquisition, revenue enhancement, and unfunded mandates.

Prospective Proposers were required to possess a minimum of five (5) years’ experience in providing State of Florida representation on issues and objectives common to municipal clients similar in governance to the Town, and demonstrate that the Proposer had at least three (3) clients that have contracted with it for the same or similar services within the last three years, including at least one client represented within Miami-Dade or Broward Counties. In addition, Proposers were required to execute a Political Activity Affidavit, whereby the successful Proposer would be precluded from participating in or being involved in any political activities related to the election of any individual running for office in the Town.

The Town received two (2) responses to the solicitation from SSG and Pittman Law Group (“PLG”). Both submittals were reviewed by Procurement and determined to be responsive.

## **Findings**

An Evaluation Committee (“Committee”) was appointed and convened on November 8, 2016. The Proposals were evaluated based on the following criteria as established in the RFP:

1. Proposer’s Qualifications, Experience of Firm, References
2. Understanding of Community Needs
3. Qualifications and Experience of Personnel Assigned to the Town
4. Price Proposal

The Committee, comprised of the following individuals, evaluated the Proposals and determined both firms were highly qualified and capable of performing the work.

1. Tony Lopez, Chief of Operations, Committee Chair
2. Renee Jean, Grants Administrator
3. Ismael Diaz, Director of Finance
4. Andrea Agha, Assistant Town Manager (Non-voting member)

After its first meeting, the Committee decided to invite both firms for interview on November 28, 2016. At the interviews, both firms were asked to identify how they could advance key aspects of the Town’s Strategic Plan. The Committee met again on November 30, 2016 and established the following ranking:

1. Southern Strategy Group (317.25 total points)
2. Pittman Law Group (295 total points)

SSG, was selected as the highest ranked Proposer. SSG, the incumbent, has worked with the Town for the past three (3) years. In that time, the Town’s experience with SSG has been positive. The firm has been responsive and available to the Town’s communication needs. SSG has helped to prepare grant applications in the past and has been integral in securing approximately \$1.6 million in State appropriations for the Town.

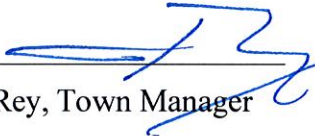
Compared to PLG, the second highest ranked proposer, SSG is a much larger firm with more resources and relationships at its disposal. The firm has seventeen (17) years of lobbying experience, and in that time it has cultivated relationships that give SSG comprehensive access to influential government officials. Recently, SSG entered a teaming agreement with Sun City Strategies (“Sun City”), led by former State Representative Eduardo Gonzalez. In SSG’s Proposal, three lobbyists are assigned to address the Town’s needs, Edgar Castro and Nelson Diaz, two SSG lobbyists whom the Town is already familiar with, and Eduardo Gonzalez.

PLG, was selected as the second highest Proposer. PLG, though new to the Town, is also a highly qualified firm. PLG is a small lobbying firm managed by attorney Sean Pittman. In his fifteen (15) years of lobbying experience, Sean Pittman has fostered relationships with many key personnel of legislative and governor’s staff. Although PLG consists of a single lobbyist, Sean Pittman is very accessible to his clients. PLG prides itself in being available in “real-time,” to update clients on current legislation.

After the interviews, the Committee felt SSG had a better understanding of the Town’s needs than PLG. Although PLG has represented larger, more complex municipalities, the firm did not seem well acquainted with the Town and its interests during the interviews. The Committee felt SSG also had stronger relationships with key officials that represent the Town at the State

Legislature. While PLG emphasized its relationship and access to staff, SSG highlighted its access directly to policymakers. Finally, the Committee was concerned with succession and whether PLG would be able to provide lobbying services in the absence of Sean Pittman. SSG has several other lobbyists at its disposal should the need arise; PLG on the other hand, does not.

Based on the above, the Committee recommends that the Town enter into a contract with SSG..

Concur:   
Alex Rey, Town Manager